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RUMMY

THAT NOBLE GAME

EXPOUNDED IN PROSE,
POETRY, DIAGRAM AND
ENGRAVING BY

A. E. COPPARD

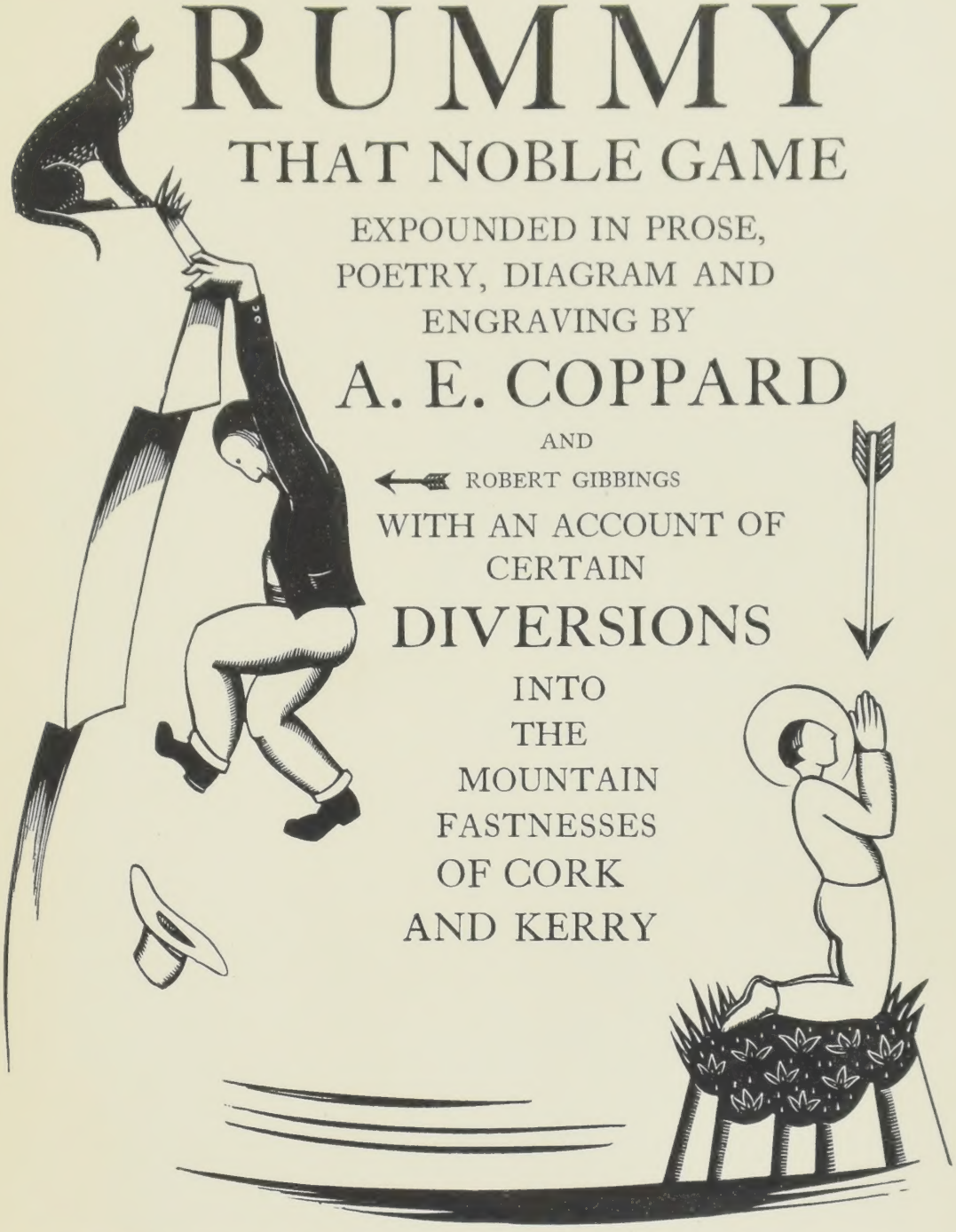
AND

ROBERT GIBBINGS

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF
CERTAIN

DIVERSIONS

INTO
THE
MOUNTAIN
FASTNESSES
OF CORK
AND KERRY



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To
the finest hotel in the world,
Cronin's of Gougane Barra
A.E.C.
R.G.

THE IMPRESSION OF LOITERING TRAVELLERS is that the finest country in the world (while they are in it) is Ireland, and the best part of Ireland is just where they happen to be at the time—you couldn't say more for heaven itself, or even the National Gallery. But to a native the best part of Ireland is always some other part you have not yet seen—and he is right. In Dublin once—but it was years ago—I said to a man it was a fine city, with noble buildings, breweries, courts, colleges, post offices, and all the amenities of monuments, museums, and grand police; it was this, it was that, O yes, but, well, didn't it have just rather more than its fair whack of things like slums?

'Begod!' said he. 'Have ye ever been to Belfast? No! Well, if it's slums you want, that's the holy place!'

In Cork now they said it was Clare we should see; in Clare they said Kerry, and in Kerry it was Galway; but we were going to all of them anyway—I have a notion that was why they said it—and we thought we would just stop awhile on the borders of two of them, so that for once we would have Cork in the hand as well as Kerry in the bush, so to speak. Of course you would not be conscious of such borders, but you would be aware of something, for Kerry *is* Kerry while Cork is nothing but Cork.

On the coast of Kerry it may be said that here you have—provided that the day is a fine day, and presuming that the coast is clear—an unparalleled view of the Atlantic, a really large view, with not a sod of clay for the sole of anyone's foot between you and the next piece of geographical territory; and that is twenty-five hundred miles away—a stretch called Labrador, where they prowl for skins. There is, it is true, a bit of a bend in the ocean that hampers the eye, but if you could get over that you would notice the sea slipping down—or it might be rising up—from the side of the globe towards the lakes Mishikamau & Petitsikapau. Now the city of Cork itself couldn't show the like of that; if it had the sea at its very door, which it has not, you would get no further than the Bay of Biscay.

But still, Gibbings came from Cork, so he is Irish to the backbone, and calls a sod a sod when he means it is a tuft of grass. It was with him I started a game of Rummy that lasted for weeks, and at one time that man was owing me a fortune. I could have bought a new hat, anyway. And now it is for the good of his soul—not mine—that I am composing the prose of this book, while he is committing the pictures. As you may see, he is a large man. I declare now, solemnly, that I have nothing much to urge against largeness merely *as* largeness, but he has a beard also to match, which gives him the

This is what Coppard pretends he thinks I look like; on page 1 you will see what he pretends he thinks he looks like; neither is true.—R.G.

aspect of the Great Personage reproduced so often in the engravings of William Blake, and so when we drifted into the fair at Bantry the whole market—drovers and tramps and the girls in the bars, even the old round-shouldered farmers sagging asleep on angular nags that were probably sleeping too —the whole market I might say woke up or stopped its business just to look at him, to talk to him, to shake hands with him, to recall the deeds of his ancestors, and to predict great things of a man with such a holy appearance on him.

'Ah, sir,' said a cripple, stolidly accepting a shilling for the sake of old times, 'an artist is a hard trade, but you've a fine mind and a grand brain—you must eat plenty of fish.'

Well, as the man is shaped, so are his arrangements. He has two or three studios—and I declare to God they are all as large as gymnasiums—and you could see him sitting in one or the other of them quietly drinking his beer, his whisky, his rum, his gin, his brandy, or whatever, as happy as a child at the breast, and squinting through a magnifying glass to carve his little pictures on a wood block no bigger than a ham sandwich.

As I might have said before, we began this game of cards in County Clare at a place called Spanish Point (which I described elegantly enough in the tale *Crotty Shinkwin*), and we continued to play it from Clare to Killarney (that's a nice spot), Killarney to Cork (you should hear the Bells of Shandon), from Cork to Macroom (in a hotel kept by a man who trained bullocks, where the only perusable book was a volume called *Leisure Hour* for the year 1866, good wholesome reading, with its essay on *Perambulators*, *Notes on Workhouse Life by a Chaplain*, *Sponge Fishing in Crete* and so on), from Macroom to Kinsale, or in Bantry, or Gougane Barra; in fact wherever we went and could.

But Killarney is a grand spot. You will always find that the most popular resorts are really the fine places they make out to be: Brighton, Kew Gardens, Epsom racecourse on Derby Day, and Wembley for the Scottish International, no less than Monsal Dale, Richmond Park, or The Devil's Dyke. And Killarney was gorgeous. We went in a jaunting car from the town, on a long winding road towards the huge hill of Carrantuohill, until we came to a break in the Reeks, the Tomies, and the Purple Mountain, which our jarvey declared 'forms the formation of the celebrated Gap of Dunloe'. At the Gap

we were cajoled by a horde of ponies and boys into hiring horses for crossing the pass to the lake, a journey of miles and more. Horseback is torture to the likes of me, and we seemed to jog on up and up over rocks and bogs and streams for hours upon hours, my cursed boy screwing the tail of the horse and urging it ever on until I told him I had delicate hams and was wishful of repose. An hour of such sport had revealed to me that I was being greatly massacred from the heels up. The sunlight throve whenever it could, and there were a few flaws of rain. The mountains,

> Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
> Of thundering Etna,

were blue, gold, black, grey, green; were smooth, craggy, fair, foul, quiet, malignant, benign; indeed they were everything mountains could be that you had never thought of. Said I to my boy:

'Why is this pass called the Gap of Dunloe?'

'Well,' he said, 'that is the name of it, you see.'

I told him I knew of a place called Taplow.
'Ah,' said he.
And a place called Dunmow.
'Ah,' he said.
'Was there ever a man called Dunloe?'
'Indeed there was.'
'What kind was he?'
'I don't rightly know.'
'He was a farmer, perhaps?'
'I could not tell you, sir; I could not. He's gone dead with the years, but his name was Dunloe, yes it was.'
A man came out of a hole in the pass and blew his trumpet for us to hear the echoes. A woman came out of a shop & wanted to sell us some cups and saucers. A lady fell off her horse and wouldn't get on again. If I could have done the same I would, but I could not; though it was agony to stay on, it would have been crucifixion to move. The great Gibbings ambled affably by, whistling. I too thought of *Heaven's reflex, Killarney!* but I also remembered Tartarus, recalled Ixion & hapless persons torn asunder by wild steeds. I felt like Tantalus. There, such a little drop below me, lay the blessed earth, and here were my two useful feet dangling in stirrups, but between them and it I was soldered, welded to a thing of a saddle, congealed in an uncouth shape, my bones calcined into postures that I should never again be able to shift or stir.

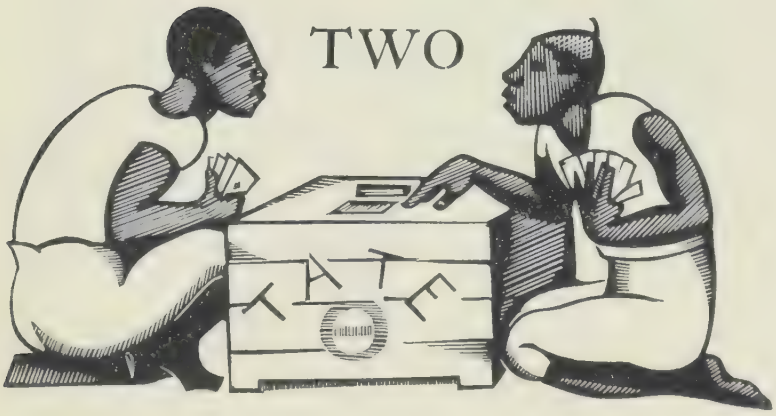
A gross exaggeration, I never whistle in holy places.—R.G.

But at last we were descending; the boy renounced the nag's tail and seized its bridle; the sun shone, there was a marvellous bright vale. Yet my pangs were by no means alleviated; beween me and Elysium was still this gorilla convulsing my mortal bones. Our journey's end seemed leagues away, men's hairs have whitened in less time than it took us to reach the lakes, but there came an hour and a place where my writhing

beast stayed and was still. With a last groan of despair I had my equestrian portrait taken; then, hurling myself down upon the familiar clod I was free once more to totter along upon my shattered remains.

Down by the lake side a boat was waiting with happy boatmen and food and tipple. And as they rowed they sang, and as they sang I swore I would surely do it all again.

THE GAME OF RUMMY MAY BE PLAYED BY TWO



THREE

FOUR

OR MORE PERSONS OF ANY CLASS,

to each of whom seven cards are dealt from two complete packs well shuffled together, cutting and dealing being as in whist. The pack is then placed face-down in the middle of the table and the top card laid face-up beside it.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

The winner is the player who scores the fewest points.

Throughout the game you must retain seven cards and no more in your hand.

As any chartered accountant will explain, there are eight of each value in the total pack, eight kings, eight fives, and so on. There are two of each card in the total pack, two kings of hearts, two fives of diamonds, and so on.

All cards have a numerical value. From three to ten they rank according to their pips, i.e. the five of any suit is value five, the nine of any suit is value nine; but all picture cards are value ten, while the aces are value eleven. The DEUCES rank as any card you like to make them, and take that value; the same rule applies to JOKERS, which can be included if the players wish or left out altogether.

The object of the game, which is a very simple one, is to acquire

A SETS, i.e. three or four cards of a similar kind, such as three or four kings or three or four fives, but all of different suits; you must not include two kings of hearts, for instance, or two fives of clubs in a set.

B SEQUENCES of three or more cards of the same suit in consecutive order, such as 6, 7, 8 of clubs. A sequence may be made up of any number of cards from three to the whole seven.

A DEUCE, irrespective of its own suit, will count as any card required to make up a set or sequence.

When you have acquired such sets or sequences they cease to score against you, and the only scoring cards are those in your hand which you have been unable to associate in these ways. The game is begun by the first player taking either the top unexposed card from the pack or the face-up card beside the pack. If the exposed card is no use to his hand he will of course take the top unexposed card; he must then reject one of his cards and place it face-up on top of the exposed card beside the pack. Should the card he picks up be of no use to him he will of course reject that one; if it *is* of use to him he will retain it and reject one of the cards already in his hand. The other players do the same in rotation until one of them has so arranged his hand that the scoring cards he holds count no more than seven or fewer. He then gives *one* knock upon the table and each player except himself may then pick and discard one more. Should he hold *no* scoring cards at all he must give *two* knocks, and no player may pick another card. The knocker (or declarer) then exposes his seven cards, and the scores are counted in strict rotation beginning with the declarer.

At this stage a player who holds any card or cards that can be added to any NON-SCORING set in the declarer's hand may so discard them, but not upon his scoring cards. For instance, if the declarer shows three kings (say hearts, spades and clubs) any other player holding the king of diamonds may, if he wishes, discard it upon the declarer's set of three, but he cannot discard upon it a card of the suit it already contains, and no discards can be made upon a complete set of four. If the set of three is made up with a deuce the discarder may ignore the suit of the deuce. Likewise, if the declarer shows a sequence of say 6, 7, 8 of spades. any other player, in strict rotation, may discard upon it the five of spades at one end or the nine of spades at the other, or both; but should the player

hold the four of spades and the player following him hold the five which he discards on the sequence, player number one cannot then discard his four, although of course player number three could do so if it lay with him.

You can only discard upon the declarer, and discards do not add to the declarer's score.

Here are four hands to show the various methods of scoring.

A

♥ K	♠ K	♣ K	♠ 6	♠ 7	♠ 8	♦ 4

4

Set	: 3 Kings	0
Sequence	: 6 7 8 spades	0
Score	: 4 diamonds	4

B

♦ K	♣ 9	♣ 10	♣ J	♠ 5	♦ Q	♥ 9

19

Sequence	: 9 10 J clubs	0
Discard	: K diamonds on A	0
„	: 5 spades on A	0
Score	: Q diamonds	10
„	: 9 hearts	9

C

♥ Q	♠ Q	♣ Q	♦ Q	♠ A	♣ 4	♠ 9

15

Set	: 4 queens	0
Discard	: 9 spades on A	0
Score	: Ace spades	11
„	: 4 clubs	4

D

♥ A	♣ A	♥ K	♠ 3	♦ 10	♣ 7	♥ 7

59

Score	: 2 Aces	22
„	: 1 King	10
„	: 4 other cards	27

These are simple directions, but it will be found that Rummy constantly invites the application of other rules, simple, complicated, scientific, or fantastic — you could, for example, adopt the scoring methods of Bridge—& the game burgeons bafflingly under such treatment. But it was with the simple rules I have just outlined that we began our game, a plain right-angled amusement that fitted my scope as neatly as the shell fits its snail, and it afforded me some pennyworths of profit until the great Gibbings began to devise amplifications that were neither simple nor scientific—they were merely frustrations—and the tiny four-square edifice of our amusement bulged into a sort of hendecahedral gasworks, offensive to my brains, disastrous to my score, and altogether nasty. In short they were entirely worthy of incorporation in the Canon of Rummy Rules, but I could not bear to poison the body of this book with these reprehensible features, so they have been relegated to a schedule and hung up, as it were, in the lavatory.

WE BEGAN THIS GAME OF CARDS AT A PLACE called Spanish Point, where we lay for a whole month waiting for the rain to stop. It did not stop very often, or for long, and so when it did stop we were not prepared for it, or we

were disinclined. Spanish Point is on that part of the coast where it is declared the Armada fleet drifted to its final doom and destruction. We did not meet a soul who knew anything about that, & the same tradition beguilingly adheres to other parts of the Irish shore; but you could tell from one squint at the wrecks and rocks from Galway to Kilkee that it is a terribly sweet coast for that kind of job.

And we played the game for a week in a house that had the bogus appearance of a castle, taking a few intervals for refreshment (mainly lobsters and barmbrack), or for sleep mingled with trifling twinges of nightmare, or in defiant walks upon the shore in the company of the Gibbings twins. These two fair-haired youths of the age of three were wandering alone with me one day over the rocks that stretch in places half a mile out to sea, and as it was stormy we were in our macintoshes, our gumboots, and our sou'-westers, slipping and staggering on seaweed or gazing at sea-urchins and anemones. Of these two little imps it may be said that taciturnity is their birthright. Incapacitated by spray, bewildered by rain, quaking with cold, or in some sort of speechless communion with the elements, they took these enjoyments with an appearance of misery that reft me to the soul; so turning to little Lawrence, who was holding on to my right hand, I spoke to him in the gayest manner I knew. He would not answer me, so I asked:

'Are you cold, Larry?' He is named after a saint who is said to have been cooked on a gridiron.

'Yes,' he said.

'Do you want to go home?'

'No,' he said.

'Ah, that's my brave boy, that's right!' And we defied the blast once more. But still, there was Finnbar holding on my left hand, so I bent down and shouted at him:

'Finn!' He is named after a saint of Irish construction. 'Finn! Are you cold, Finn?'
And he said 'No'.
'Do you want to go home?'
And he said 'Yes'.
So there was I with a problem on each of my two hands. What should we do? Well, this was it.
'Will you wait here, Larry, while I take Finn home?' But I was thinking to myself: God knows, I can't leave him here to the wrath of this ocean. 'I'll come back again very quick.'
'No,' says he.
'Ah well, come on then; we'll take Finn home, and then we'll come back together.'
'No,' says he.
'You will not! Then', said I to Finn, 'we'll stop a while longer and see if we can collar some crabs.'
'No,' says he.
'But you love crabs!'
He said he did not.
And how the rain raged! The waves combed over the battlemented rocks with obliterating crunches, and the wind rattled their two little waterproofs like the shutters of an empty shop. It was impossible to stay, and quite as difficult to go. I am no mathematician or soothing-sayer, and the reach of infant guile exceeds my grasp. The opportunity of King Solomon when confronted with that dispute between the two mothers of one infant did not present itself to me; a dispute between two infants and no parent at all is no such simple matter. I could have anchored Larry—I thought of it—by his own belt to a clamp of wreckage there, but he would have been devoured by some spirited crustacean or swept into the Atlantic before I could say 'Don't do that!' Happily, by some congenital accident, I am something of a philosopher, and

philosophy is death to all predicaments. In the midst of my bedazement I remembered there was a bull's-eye shop close on the shore.

Thither we drifted, and as we went I became obsessed by a line of Emerson's poetry:

'Nature loves the number five.'

Do you know, that man wrote some splendid poetry, but nobody seems to read it nowadays. Like Emily Dickinson he had nearly every poetic gift, but while his verses seem to sit as neat and regular as the fine teeth of a saw—they often cut like a saw. Yet there are times when he almost touches perfection: his little poem 'Forerunners' has the curving flight of an arrow bound for a mark that only he could hit.

'Nature loves the number five.'

Mysterious evocation! I knew I had five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot, yet it had never occurred to me to question why there were precisely five and not seventeen, or eleven. There are even five continents, and the name of one of them fittingly begins with a different letter from the others.

Now only that morning Gibbings had established the following new rule for our game of Rummy:

> *When any player, declarer or opponent, holds a set of four cards of a kind (all of different suits) the score of every other player must be debited with four times the value of the particular card: i.e. four tens involve a penalty of* 40, *and so on. For this rule no deuces or jokers can be accepted.*

And musing upon the assertion that nature loves the number five it suddenly crashed upon my mind that if four cards of a kind meet with so substantial reward in the game of Rummy, five of a kind ought to be still more profitable. So, after perambulating my two companions from the bull's-eye shop, I ran up to the drawing room, tore the cards out of Gibbings' hands, and cried out:

'If four, why not five?'
He blenched for a moment, but when he had fully comprehended me he only said:
'If five, why not six?'
'Why not?' I shouted.
'Or seven?' said he.
'Exactly!' I agreed.
'We might try it for a bit,' he said dubiously. 'But the base of the rule is that you must have four of different suits to begin with. You might have, for example, six kings omitting both kings of hearts; in that case you could not declare six kings, but only two sets of three kings.'
'That is just what I mean.'
'Very well. The holder of a set of four of a kind will penalize the other players four times the face value of the particular card, and sets of five, six or seven of a kind will entail penalties of five, six, or seven times the card's value.'
We made a rule of it; and it is as good a rule as any other made in this infernal game of Rummy although it was of little use to me, because the very difficult job of assembling five or six or seven of a kind suddenly became astonishingly easy in the hands of Mr. Gibbings. There are many misfitting people in the world who never reap the profit of their inventions, no matter how they strive and plan; they go from pillar to post & plod indigently gravewards. Who was it invented matches, I wonder? I think it very likely that he ended by selling them on the kerb. No matter how they toil and spin, these shorn lambs seem to be earmarked with a sort of boomerang on their foreheads—at least, they would be in Ireland. And I played Bob Gibbings under this new rule until I felt like Dicey Dart in the story of Terence Maloney. This Maloney was a respected publican in a little town (I forget where), and there came a time when he was made a Justice of the Peace and

promoted to the local bench of magistrates. On the very first day he took his seat in the court he was by some odd bit of a chance the only magistrate in attendance, and it fell to his lot to try the case of a fellow publican, this Dicey Dart, an old crony of his, who was summoned for selling intoxicating liquor after closing time.

'Not guilty,' said Dicey Dart. 'Not guilty,' he says.

So they heard all the evidence of the police and the witnesses, and at the conclusion the judge ordered Dicey to stand up—but he was already standing up.

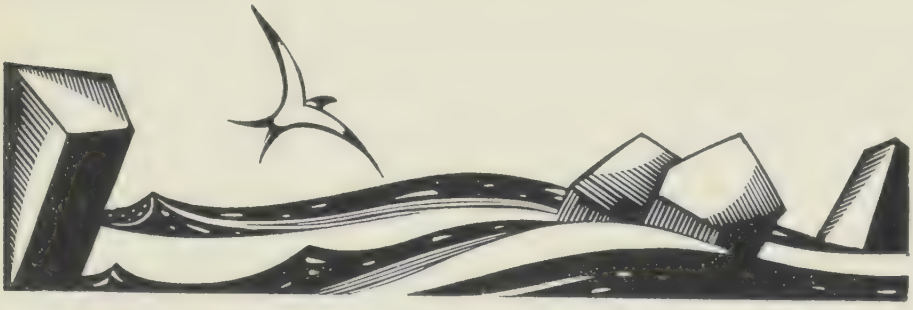
'Dicey,' the judge said sternly, 'I shall have to fine you a pound.'

'But Terry!' cried the victim, 'I'm not guilty! I'm an innocent man. As true as my trust in God I'm innocent, and you know it, you old dog. You know that, Terry, don't you? Ha ha, you know it!'

'I shall fine you a pound,' the judge gravely repeated.

'Och! Give over, Terry; stop your fun!' Dicey said. 'I am not guilty. I could swear to that by my blessed holy soul for ever and all and after. Not guilty.'

'Dicey!' says he. 'Don't take on so! You brought it on yourself. I've tried you fairly and truly and in good order, and I shall fine you a pound. If you're guilty, it's letting you off light. And if you're innocent,' says he, 'it'll be a lesson to you for the future.'



FOR TWENTY YEARS I HAD HEARD OFF AND on of the Cliffs of Moher. I was told it was a spot that struck awe with its uniqueness, enraptured with its horror, and appalled with its grim beauty—and that's a trinity of sensations as rare as a child's first view of a policeman or the inside of a chimney.

Now it is the way of the heart (or is it the mind?) to lay hold of such tiny grains of suggestion and nourish them in secret until they become a part of you and your fond desires, much as a true Christian thinks of Heaven, a Brahmin of Nirvana, or an explorer of the Poles. But the soul knows that all such bourns must be travelled to in arduous longing, approached with patience on congenial feet: they can neither be brought to your door nor visited in a cab. Otherwise a man might win an unfair way to Heaven, only to turn from it in discontent as sadly as he would turn from Manchester. But it fell to

my lot that I must go there at last in a car or I should not go at all, a sad alternative for the likes of me—for go I must.
Through Lahinch we went, past a ferry where a priest and his horse were drowned one night going to visit a man dying, and so on to Liscannor, when a lofty pillar erected to Mr. O'Brien soon begins to denote the way; fine open rolling country, rising to the cliffs where the turf is lovely though the rocks are wry. A queer soul this Mr. O'Brien must have been. Who or what he was I do not know, but he had the regal touch in his endeavours. Right upon the edge of the cliffs he built a highish tower—though it's a ruin now for a hundred years—and close by it he contrived a race-course. With a fence composed of great slivers of rock he gently confined the sheep and cattle to the cliff-top, and on a natural piazza there he erected a round stone table to dine his intimates when the days were warm, & perhaps himself alone when the warmth was gone.
Seven hundred feet below the table the sea washes the rock, but to look at it you must be down on your belly, peering over, for there are queer currents of air at the edge. Thus, if you have a right mind, you will laugh with the strange laughter of fear at itself, for the dark cliffs, dark on the brightest day, curve in under you; and the surging sea is so far below that you cannot hear it. How long would yourself take to fall from top to shore! I dropped small stones into that immortal depth, but they twirled up in the air before me and flew back over my head. I did not care to look up into the sky. Far below were gulls, rocks, and puffing holes. The gulls were rafting in the air or gathered upon the roofs of scattered crags as large as churches; and grander, too, for they had been there since Holy Ireland was a child. Some caves at the foot were one half full of water, and when a high wave hurled itself into them its greater bulk momentarily sealed up the mouth of

the cave; the advancing water compressed the air within until it exploded with the roar of some absymal dragon, and the sea was vomited back in magnificent fountains festooning a hundred yards or more.

A few miles out upon the water lay the three Isles of Aran, and further I could see two separate storms crossing the Atlantic on their breezy journey—God bless it!—to Iceland. And here, in this turf, the trivial seapink had been flourishing and had died; but it will bloom again, though the stones of Mr. O'Brien have no such virtue. Somehow, in all that stupendous view of things that had no date or care of time, my living thought was mainly of this queer Mr. O'Brien, long since dead, his tower in ruins, his race-course gone, his table a joking place for the unseemly.

But the Irish have a kindly regard for decay; and a ruin, no matter what its date or station, is suffered to prolong its own denuding doom without encumbrances that contrive to make a profit out of its bygone honour. I have heard say that in enlightened countries a ruin is more delicately preserved; a fence is built around it, a code of conduct prescribed lest the place be torn to pieces, regulations drawn up as to hours, payments (terms for large quantities), the temporary disposal of conveyances, and a booking office provided for a dangerous-looking man from whom you may purchase tickets to see what nobody now can do with. Societies flourish whose hobby it is to buy up a whole ill-conditioned decrepit insanitary village, not to put it into order but to preserve its noxious vapours and impossible character along with the timber and tiles which have caused somebody to melt with the lath and plaster of emotion. Have they a national poet buried in a church? It is as like as not you will be charged sixpence a time for the privilege of observing the stone slab that hides him from your gaze. Had he by chance a birthplace, a home? If so you may

be sued for twice as much, and cantankerous ostlers installed for the purpose of selling you expensive picture postcards. By such means the dignity of history is conserved and the pride of heritage dutifully paid for.

Ireland remains blind to these inscrutable refinements. On Lough Neagh's banks I happened long ago upon a building that had lain wrecked for many years. The roof was gone, 'it must have consisted of a most inflammable nature', and the doors; but the glass—red, violet, and green—was almost intact and certainly unrifled. This ruin lay beyond a bridge over a river and its walls bore the large-lettered names of men who were prominent in their time (John Bright, I remember, and I think Darwin was another) together with this inscription:

THE TEMPLE
of Liberty Learning and Select Amusement
designed erected and endowed
by John Casey
A free gift to his country.

It has no architecture and, I suppose, very little history; but it is a pathetic memorial, and in Ireland it will deservedly endure.

Not a great way off the Cliffs of Moher we came to a holy well—St. Bridget again. It bubbled from a tunnel in the middle of a burial ground. A bright breeze was on the day, blue was the colour of the sky, and fuchsias were shaking all over the fence. A lady in black was kneeling before the plaster figure of a saint in a glass case; the saint was holding a sheep-crook in one hand and a cathedral in the other; the kneeling lady was telling her beads. I crept into the tunnel where an old woman with a jug filled me a glass of the holy water, which I declare was the drainings of all the corpses under the tombs, and I gave her a coin. She mumbled something, holy

no doubt, but I could not understand it, and put the coin in a tin box marked 'Sharp's Creamy'. I came out of the tunnel and stared over the fence at a bull calf standing by the stream from the holy well, scratching its ear with its hind leg. A bright breeze was on the day, fuchsias were shaking all over the fence, and there was Mr. O'Brien's monument adjacent, a great tall Greek spigot with a weeping urn on top. And further down the hill I could see the fragments of his mansion among a fine wood of trees that looked scorched by the blasts from the brine. Mr. O'Brien is dismantled, his house is gone or going, his race-course is gone & his tower is a ruin; but his pillar with the weeping urn is a stubborn piece of masonry—thanks be to God.

That night I added another great catch to my creel of points in this game of Rummy, and Mr. Gibbings was driven to invent some more fine desperate rules. He was like a bumble bee trying to get out of a window that was fast shuttered without even a crack in it & the prospect very gloomy. Every five minutes or so he made a new rule, which he wrote down in his birthday book with the date of it.

If I wasn't polite I'd say, A dirty lie! and me winning for weeks on end.—R.G.

'Before I went to Connemara', he said, 'it was agreed that if I held seven aces in my hand it would count seventy-seven against you. That was on the 23rd.'

'Well, you haven't got seven aces *this* time!' I notified him.

'But I might get them yet.'

'You might! I've only got six now, three of each, with a joker!'

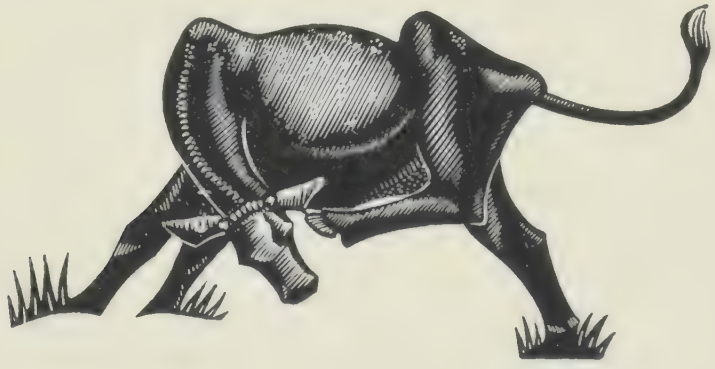
'Then why don't you knock?'

'I was waiting to get seven of 'em,' said I.

'O ho, my friend!' says he, 'you're fined twenty for not knocking when your hand is empty!'

'Fined is it?'

'That's the rule.'
'The rule! And who made it?'
'We did. We made it.'
'And when did we make that rule?'
'O, a while ago—you know—just before I went to Connemara. It was the 23rd of the month.'
'It's the first time I've heard a word of it.'
'It's the first time it's come up,' said he.
My God! the lies that fellow tells.—R.G.
'And I'm to be fined!'
'A rule's a rule,' he said. In fact, he kept on saying it.
And there's no arguing with a behemoth of twenty stone that has his back to the wall and destitution breathing politely on him. So I asked him:
Eighteen and a half; lies again.—R.G.
'Are you by any chance going to Connemara again, Bob?'
'I might,' says he.
'Well, if you'd only brass up before you go I'd come with you next time.'
'Aw, I don't think I'll be going there yet awhile; in fact, no, I don't think I'll be going that way at all.'
'Tis speechless I am after that.—R.G.



IN THE COURSE OF OUR JOURNEY WE CAME TO a place called Gougane Barra. Driving along the Inchigheela road towards the Derrynasaggart Mountains we turned into a nook of the hills, and there lay a long narrow lake in the midst of some mountains that looked unscaleable; they encompassed it closely save at the outfall. There was no going through them or over them, and there was only the lake to drop into with no going beyond it, and the day was dull. Surely it was the end of any man's journey, and when we spied a bit of shore with Cronin's Hotel built on it we went there and stayed for two weeks.

It rained many days; the clouded mountains, half shorn of height but their prodigy increased, roared with milky streams, and the grave lake lay twitching its sprinkled skin. I guess the nights were as bad, but it did not matter much one way or the other; for when it was wet we would play Rummy from end to end of the day (always in the dining-room in case we'd miss a meal), and at night there would be dancing in the kitchen,

'With the fiddler's old tune and the shuffling of feet.'

On fine days you might go and look at the mountains, rocky, boggy, steep, and treeless, ranging in their golden polity. You could see sheep on them, and heather. If there were streams they would be unseen and silent now. The sky over mountains is so very blue, and a lake under a cliff is so soft and seemly. One or two people might be walking about, you could hear footsteps crunching the gravel a way off, they would be going to the landing-stage. And that is a mantrap —no less—with its leaky boats and thwarts with no luxury for the hams; and oars that match not, neither do they fit. But there are fish that will immolate themselves precociously for you (at least, they do for Mr. Fitz), reeds sighing, and an air teasing the quiet water with a silver feather. It is very soothing

and quiet. A little peninsula with a church on it juts into the lake, and beside the church is St. Finnbarr's Shrine—or it may have been St. Finnbarr's once. Anyway, in the eighteenth century a man of great zeal built or re-built on this spot a roofless quadrangular chapel, with twelve cells and the stations of the cross. Now there are trees growing round it and over it, holly, oak, and ash, and there is grass underfoot, though the cells are dank and mouldy. With the sun on the sward and wind in the trees, old walls and lapping water, it is the very home of tranquillity, pious, remote, and unfading. Once a year a pilgrimage is made to the shrine, and between whiles persons visit it daily. Some, urged by curious devotion or desire, enter a cell to write out a prayer on any odd scrap of paper and leave it there—for unscrupulous eyes like mine. And if I were a god I would wish to grant them all. It was no disrespect whatever, but a sacred curiosity made me read and go on reading them, until the quiet shrine with the sun in its bosom and the trees waving was peopled with frail ghosts whispering for little favours, & one could hold time itself between finger and thumb as though it was a pin you had no use for but must not throw away.

This is all too holy a place for me to draw, though there are some who don't hesitate to write about it. Still, I'll give you a few more woodcuts later on.—R.G.

On the back of a trade card was scrawled this plea:

For a happy death.

I wondered what was on the mind of the suppliant, who was a purveyor of lubricating oil. Youth and hope gone? Gaiety gone? Charm denied? Ambition foundered? Or was it just this timely afterthought: life was already happy enough, the hereafter had been decently arranged for—he had but to ensure that the moment of change over should be agreeable too?

There was only a trifling etymological doubt about this other:

Please cure my worths if it be the will of God.

Some were clearly inspired by problems that were economic rather than ethical:

Please give me the position please.

Pray for success in my examination please St. Finnbarr.

That was the predominant note; indeed, the cry of the conscientious sinner only came once and it came on the leaf of a college fixture card:

O St. Finnbarr obtain of Jesus for me the grace to make me a saint and to go this August to heaven if it be his holy will.

And there was no mysticism and very little piety—nothing but a sweet human invocation—on a half sheet torn from a penny account book:

Please send me a good husband and happy home
and send D a good constant job.

Do but note: she wanted goodness as well as happiness.

By the side of the shrine an old holly tree flourished, under it stood a Wishing Stone, and there was something to be done about that. The ritual was, first to hang upon the tree a personal offering, and then to sit upon the stone and wish a secret wish. The tree was hung with hundreds of tokens, vastly more numerous than the prayers in the shrine, and these alms of faith comprised

Bootlaces
Handkerchiefs
Burnt matches
Pencils
Necklaces
Scraps of torn clothing
Capsule from a whisky bottle
Rosaries
Collar studs
Tram tickets
Holy medallions

Brace buckles
Billiard chalk
Half a horseshoe
Weight ticket from Jury's Hotel, 28:7:30
Buttons from boots, shirts, and trousers
Safety pins
Some coins.

I imagine the secret wishes were one in essence with the prayers, but of the issue in either case I cannot speak. I suspect, though, that the great Gibbings must have buried a lucky shilling under the roots of that holly tree and wished a very extravagant wish, for it was about this time that his luck with the cards took a dramatic swerve. For a few days I did not mind this—I even encouraged it—for my pockets were stuffed with his I.O.U.'s and I no more wanted him ruined than I wanted ruin for myself; one has heard of stricken gamblers who cast themselves over the Falls of Niagara or swilled themselves into Tophet with longish draughts of henbane. But his invention of new rules now became charged with such unnatural significance to me that all his I.O.U.'s speedily became U.O.ME's, and I was driven to pay many secret visits to the Wishing Stone; I left half my wardrobe on that holly tree. Luck is luck, and I protest you are entitled to it when it is obtained by honest means, by desert, or by natural capacity; but when these virtues are quite lacking (God help him!), or not in any way conspicuous, your adversary must be devilishly hand in glove with the sword of Damocles. There *is* no other explanation.

The hotel at Gougane (you pronounce that word Googawn) the hotel I say is grafted on a farm containing all the appropriate ornaments like pigs, cattle, sheep, a motor car, hens, ducks, dogs, cats and trout. You may see Denis Cronin, the son, at any hour of the day, his cap turned backwards with

the peak on the nape of his neck, coming here with a little pig under his arm or journeying there with two pails of something—slops or offal. The sheep are stravaiging away on the mountains among heather, bog and stream, and it is a sight of the world to see Denis on the eve of a market day skipping about the ramparts of the impassable mountains to gather a bunch of ewes that have no faith in his blarney, and do not desire to be taken for transmigration in a lorry to Macroom —or it might be Bantry. And anyway, if an animal has no soul how comes it that he longs so for freedom?

When we first watched Denis leaping the crags from crocket to spire, from spire to finial, from finial to frieze and balancing like a crow on a twig, Mr. Gibbings was bedazzled.

'Begod, I didn't know he could get up there!'

'Oi,' said I, 'a sheep can do it.'

'Do you think we might have a go at it, one of these days?'

'Sure, what's to stop us?'

'One of these days,' he said.

'Come on, let's go.'

'One of these days,' he gently insisted.

The ways of the world are pleasingly diverse: if they were not there would be only one way—the Dear knows which, but it would be a stale one: and so a hotel of this kind has its own cranky customs. At eight o'clock on the first morning I rose like a lark—a huge can of hot water was outside my door. On the second morning, at eight thirty, I rose with fewer trills. There was a different can, not quite so large; and do you know, they performed this little fugue on the utensils and time of the house, getting smaller and later although there was always something somehow somewhen, until towards the end of our stay this ablutionary element was being conveyed to me a trifle before noon in the trifle of a milk jug. For breakfast there would be trout from the lake, ham from

the chimney, eggs from the birds that had been busy since dawn, bastable bread that was warm if you wanted it so, and conserves that would be a luxury even on Mount Hybla. The trout were caught by Mr. Fitz, who happened to be staying there too. I have no hand or hook for the fishing, but Mr. Fitz had the angler's artful finger and his cap was covered with hooks. It was queer the fish didn't notice them, but indeed I have no respect left for the intellect of trouts; what little I had was drowned in quenchless appetite. And of such, Mr. Fitz, poor man, was precisely devoid. He had gone out in the boat and been oared to and fro by Mrs. Fitz while he cast his lures and swished and smoked. After an hour or two they came in from the lake, and Gibbings and I tore ourselves from the cards to enquire of him how he had fared.

'Tare and hounds,' he exclaimed with a smile that somehow seemed to hiss through his genial teeth, 'it's, it's outrageous! The whole damn lake has been spoiled by too much feeding; the trout finds all he wants at the bottom and won't rise to it.'

'He won't?'

'Not a skin of him.'

'Ah, well; you may have sport to-morrow.'

'I declare, I'm ashamed. I am.'

'Not a bite?'

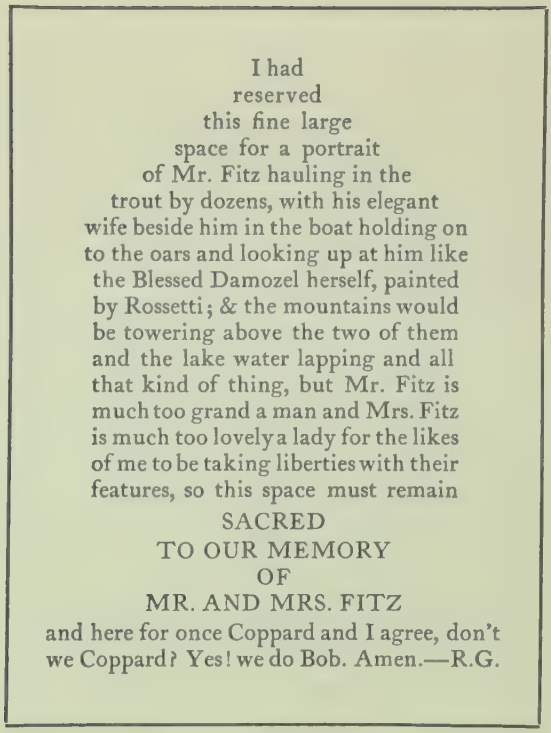
'Oh, I got a bite; yes, I did.'

'But you couldn't hook 'em?'

'Oh, I hooked 'em; yes, I did; but a few only. About fifteen, or sixteen maybe.'

Heaven and Mary! What *did* the man expect to catch in that space of time?

'Och!' he explained. 'I ought to have caught a couple of dozen, at least a couple of dozen. I'd be satisfied with thirty or forty. I'll do it presently—only it's the wind, the wind, ye know.'


I had
reserved
this fine large
space for a portrait
of Mr. Fitz hauling in the
trout by dozens, with his elegant
wife beside him in the boat holding on
to the oars and looking up at him like
the Blessed Damozel herself, painted
by Rossetti; & the mountains would
be towering above the two of them
and the lake water lapping and all
that kind of thing, but Mr. Fitz is
much too grand a man and Mrs. Fitz
is much too lovely a lady for the likes
of me to be taking liberties with their
features, so this space must remain
SACRED
TO OUR MEMORY
OF
MR. AND MRS. FITZ
and here for once Coppard and I agree, don't
we Coppard? Yes! we do Bob. Amen.—R.G.

In my simplicity I said: 'But you couldn't eat that lot!'

'No, I could not,' he agreed.

'He can not eat them at all!' cried Mrs. Fitz.

'It's true,' said he. 'I hate 'em.'

'Nor the smell of them cooking—he would walk out of the house?' Mrs. Fitz declared. 'To eat them he could not be induced.'

'I can not bear them,' said he.

'I have to take them off the hooks and carry them, for touch them he will not,' his wife went on. 'When we go in a car to the fishing he will not consent to bring them in the car with him; I must tie them on the back of the car, or the handle of the door!'

'Then why, Mr. Fitz,' I asked the guilty man, 'why do you go on catching them at all?'

'It's sport,' he gravely explained. 'I do not like leaving them in all that water. It's like the cards, ye know!' he slyly added.

At that Gibbings & I turned resolutely to our contest again, but for a few moments my mind was writhing with parturient anguish until this gigantic gnat—it had an illustrious father—was born:

For each man kills the thing he hates:
O soul-delighting labour!
The angler does it with his baits,
The gossip with his neighbour.

'He's pretty good with a gun, too, I hear,' said Mr. Gibbings.

'A man like that', I answered, 'is good for anything.'

And indeed it is very true. By some gentle process, it may be the air, it may be the breed, but it is something national entirely, an Irishman grows better as he grows older. Like wine he is good to start with, and by the time he reaches middle age he acquires richness of tang and the flavour of humanity at its best. Give me an Irishman and I'll engage to find—outside the novels of Mr. O'Flaherty—something rather agreeable in him.

'Suppose he plays cards as well as he fishes?' murmured Mr. Gibbings.

'I don't think I could bear it,' I answered.

'Perhaps we'd better not ask him?'

'We will not,' said I.

Just then a pair of ladies entered the room for tea, one elderly with a youthful bonnet, and she was deaf; the other, her daughter, was youthful with an elderly air. They had come from Lissaphouka or Pouladuff. The daughter was a masterful creature; she was in charge of the expedition. When she said: 'Sit there, mother!' her mother sat there wherever it might be; and I think she had been sitting so for years, for that daughter was—I'll be sworn—one of those pitying governesses

who really know the difference between Mary of Argyle and Mary Queen of Scots. The difference (I fancy) is merely an historical one, though I have never been able to assert that with any confidence myself. They sat silently disposing of their tea, while I was knocking a few more shillingsworth out of Mr. Gibbings, and then the daughter began to converse with her mother in a loud harsh voice: 'What did you say, mother?'

You see how distant and superior he is with his misters when he's winning; wait a while till you see him affectionate when he's on the losing side.—R.G.

'Eh?'

'What did you say?'

'No, I didn't.'

'Did you say something to me I didn't hear you say?'

'I don't know,' replied her mother.

The daughter stirred her tea violently and stared out of the window.

'The prospect is very harmonious here. Those mountains! So placid, eh? And the lake! So placid, too. It's the source of the river Lee, that is. How would you like to stay here?'

The mother turned her gaze upon the view, then shook her head: 'I don't think so.'

'What! I said: How long would you like to stay here?'

'About half an hour,' was the reply.

'Got you this time!' cried my antagonist, giving a loud double knock. 'Seven deuces I hold! That's 350 against you, anyway.'

It recalled me rather sharply from the harmonious prospect.

'It is a very good hand, Bob.'

'Pretty good,' said he.

'Very good. I can't imagine how you got hold of such a hand, Bob. I don't want to seem inquisitive, Bob, and you must excuse me, but how do I come to be penalized with this 350?'

There, now, didn't I tell you so.—R.G.

'It's that rule, you know,' said he.

'That rule, is it?'
'Yes, you remember it!'
'I do not, Bob; I do not.'
So he pulled out his little notebook & scrutinized some pages:
'Yes. O yes. Here it is. It was the day we met the fiddler—you remember him—under the sycamore tree.'
Sycamore tree—did I remember that fiddler? He was playing 'The Geese in the Bog'. It is a very fine tune but he played it to us for five and twenty minutes. Then we managed to remark to him that he was an unparalleled exponent on the beautiful instrument, and we made to go off. The fiddler gave us his hat: 'I must be paid,' says he; 'Give me an excusation, but money is the chief finance of this job!'
'O yes, I remember *him*.'
'It was then,' Bob explained.
'What was then?'
'The rule we made.'
'What rule?'
'The rule I'm telling you.'
I gave him a good honest look, but he didn't flinch. Huge powerful fellow!
'I've heard', I said, 'of the laws of the Medes and the Persians —though I never dropped an eye on one of them. The Portland Club has its rules, the Jockey Club its canonicals, and the Pope his Bulls. Then there's the Code of Napoleon, the Excise, and the Ku Klux Klan; but of all the . . .'
'Come on!' said Bob. 'It's your deal.'
'of all the . . .'
'And it's my pick.'
'of all the . . .'
But in came a parcel of more interrupting people for tea, half a dozen, male and female, one of them an old American lady of about seventy who had but recently landed in Cork.

'Where will you sit, Auntie? Sit here, Auntie!' cried the family. 'And what will you take for your tea?'
Auntie sat down, untied a wrap, and deposited a bag on the floor. 'I've heard such a lot about this Guinness since I've come back,' said she, 'I think I'd like to have some of that.'
A sombre silence fell upon the family group, until a man with a face like a cut of salmon said: 'We don't have it for tea, Auntie, not here.'
'We never have tea at all in the States,' retorted Auntie, 'but I would like to taste some Guinness; I've heard such a lot of talk about it.'
With gloomy embarrassment the man acceded to her wish. 'Well, er, you can have it. Sure, you can have a drop and try it.'

So they brought the old lady a bottle of stout in with the tea things.
'My!' she cried. 'What small bottles—I'd better have two of them!'
'Ah, go steady, Auntie!' said the man. But soon she was sitting with two bottles poured out in glasses before her, and great cushions of foam on them.
'Go steady, Auntie!' the man pleaded again.
She wouldn't go steady at all, and had reached a high pitch of hilarity when Mr. Gibbings called my wandering attention to the fact that I had lost another couple of hundred points.
'To-morrow, Bob,' said I, 'we will take to the mountains.'
He said he fancied he would like to have a scamper on the mountains.
'And it's there', I said, 'I'll break your heart, in lumps.'

WE HAD THE PUREST INTENTIONS OF RISING early in the morning so as to make a good day of it on the mountains, but after supper there was a dance in the kitchen and go we must; for there is no enjoyment in the world to match a dance on the stone flags, with a turf fire cooking a loaf on it, a fiddler in the corner, and a small lamp giving just enough light to show the big jar of onions on the locker. Mrs. Cronin was there, Denis was there, and if his elder brother Conn was handsome itself what *am* I to say of their sister Molly? And there was Mrs. Fitz & a dozen other people from nearby, while Mr. Fitz was the sort of president who would have collogued St. Patrick himself into it, for in the twinkle of an eye he could turn you into a dancer or a singer although you had never cast a thought upon such conceits before.

'Come on, now. Stow your blathering!' says he, and he puts my hand in Molly Cronin's hand, and there was I in the midst of *The Waves of Troy*, dancing like a wave of the sea. At least, it appeared so to me, but I doubt it was Miss Molly only, for if ever you saw Queen Venus rising and bobbing in the foam it would be then. It was a sort of chain dance; with my hand in Molly's hand we advanced to meet the other couples sweeping towards us, and with such looks in their eyes! You bend and step under the first couple's outstretched arms, but open out for the next couple to bend and step under yours, and so on, alternating with a curious wavelike movement until you reach the top.

'Cast off!' roared Mr. Fitz.

At that moment, as I released my partner's hand, someone pinched my sacred anatomy. I admit this was disturbing to me, for I am a person of some natural dignity; but I discovered in the pursuit of the dance that the same privilege regularly presented itself to *me*, and so dignity went off where he belonged.

Between the jigs and reels and hornpipes the fiddler would croon some Gaelic airs, and once the stray traveller sitting beside him began *The Gentle Maiden*, a song I had not thought to hear outside of Bloomsbury.

Because of this we did not go to bed until two o'clock; but Conn and Denis were off with the sheep to market at four, and they left their dog behind them. I forget its name, but it was the offspring of a collie that might have known better, and when we began our ascent of the mountains in the forenoon that dog came with us.

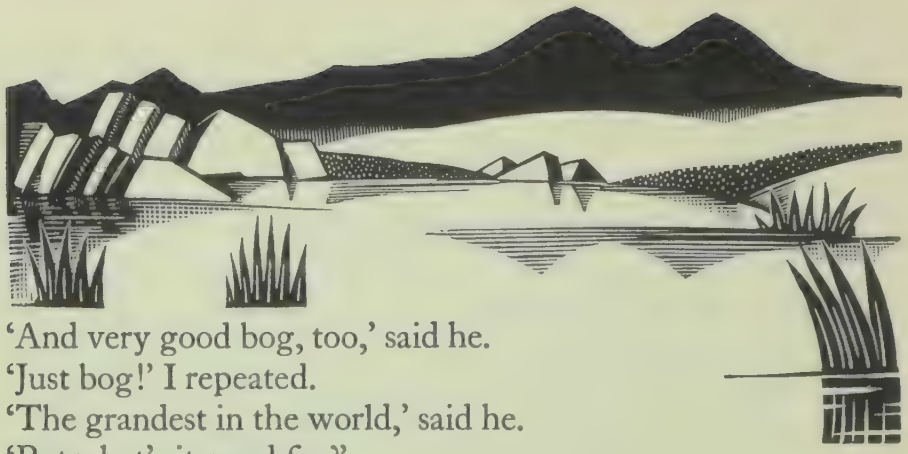
At the first footing the climb was easy and we went cheerily up, behind or before the dog—I wish I could remember his name—until the hotel became a mere cot beside a pool of sleeping water, and the mountains prone leviathans feigning an indolence that might conceal a passion; tawny, sublime, and yet perturbing. The day was bright and warm, and our

This is me getting near the top; Coppard is lost below.—R.G.

track grew steeper as the region began to quarry out in vast crescents of rock and bog. By and by Mr. Gibbings, who is normally a personage of spiritual tone although his physical contour is as generous as the outline of a map of Africa, removed some parts of his costume. At intervals, as we travelled higher into the beguiling privacy of nature, he removed the whole; and in beard and shoes only, trousers under arm, bestrode the ridges like a shameless Greek colossus, murmuring: 'Damn the flies!' or 'That was a snipe, that was!'

On the uplands of the mountains, eighteen hundred feet high, we could see for a while nothing but bog, not a hint of hut, tree, road, or any vestige of human nature; but presently we came to rock and heather again, and some little lakes where we tried to bathe but could not because of their rocks and treacherous swamps and the fool of a dog. The air being frisky here, Mr. Gibbings reassumed his clothing and made sketches of pools and peaks, while I mooned about with a sort of happy wonder on me as though I was halfway to heaven. The view glided in leagues of almost earnest isolation; craggy peaks, boggy uplands, valleys without a home, all seemed in their aloofness to be striving for some confluence with the sky rather than for any commerce with the world. The one lowly thing was the heather, and I found the half of a newspaper clinging to a bush of it close by us. I lay down in a heather bed and began to read it, for there was nothing else to do, and in the event I read it as the old bedridden woman read her bible. (And how was that, pray you? Why, sir, I am told she read it from pillow to post.) This was an old number, but none the worse for that; you might as well throw an eye over the past, for the present is but dough in the oven, while the future may find you without any eye at all.

'I suppose you realize', I said to the abstracted artist, 'that a seventh part of this country of yours is all bog?'



'And very good bog, too,' said he.
'Just bog!' I repeated.
'The grandest in the world,' said he.
'But what's it good for?'
'Snipe!' said he.
'It's rather a large portion of the country, isn't it, for such a little bird?'
'You must never', he answered—and just a little brusquely I thought, though I didn't mind that, for he was engrossed with his drawing of The Paps of Dana a dozen miles in the offing; I took a photograph of them myself later on—'you must never look the gifts in the mouth.'
'The gifts, Bob?'
'Of God,' said he. And he then went on to ask me: 'What's the news?'

This is true; there's the wood-cut just above, & here's a story about Coppard, when he was taking the mountain twelve miles away. 'You're too far off,' said I. 'Wait a while,' says he, 'till I cross over the road & I'll be nearer.' That's true too.—R.G.

'The news', said I, 'is this.' And I began to read little pieces to him out of the newspaper.

> Michael McMahon and Son have received instructions from J. J. Meade Esq. to sell by Public auction at Ennis on Thursday, the 7th day of August, at the hour of one o'clock, p.m. (summer time) one acre of Growing Oats. The oats is a very good crop and very fine quality. Terms—Cash and five per cent commission.

'It's a most industrious country,' remarked Mr. Gibbings, 'it really is!'

So then I read out the bit about the boy who seemed to have been industrious too.

> PERSONAL. Will the boy who received the glasses from the lady off the window sill in Grattan street on Friday morning, please return to 29 Wycherley Terrace (off College Road). Reward given.

'It's polite, anyway,' said Mr. Gibbings. 'And very decent of her.'

'What glasses could they be, Bob? There are such heaps of glasses; for wine and beer, and milk sometimes. Opera glasses, magnifying glasses, chandelier glasses—prisms, you know—and pier glasses, though it couldn't have been them. But it might have been looking-glasses. And don't they have tea glasses in Russia? What *could* they have been? And that lady off the window sill: could she, do you think ...? But no, it was only a boy, a little boy I'm sure. He must have been a fairy-child, an imp, a golden-haired gnome; and he heard her playing them, siren-like ...'

'Playing what?'

'Her musical glasses; they are fond of mystical music, and I suppose his sudden appearance at her window startled her—she just slipped. But it can't be the least bit of use advertising for them in a newspaper. The proper way is to go to a rath at midnight and make a secret noise with the wishbone of a hare.'

'What the hell are you talking about!' roared Mr. Gibbings.

'The glasses, Bob. It's rather mysterious, and I don't see ...'

'They're spectacles, you fool!' he cried, making a great black scratch on his drawing block.

'Spectacles! Can it be so, do you think, Bob? Just spectacles?'

'What else *could* they be?'

I was perfectly astounded. 'Well, perhaps it is so,' I said. 'And I suppose the poor little boy was growing short-sighted, or

something like that, Bob, and she lent them to him? It was rather kind of her.'

'Very, very kind!' retorted he.

'I wonder why she wants them back now?'

Mr. Gibbings turned on me: 'I wish you would take this ruddy dog out of my way while I finish this ruddy drawing. And take that ruddy newspaper with you and bury it, or burn it, or obliterate it; I can't bear to see such a hell of a litter about the country side!'

So I did that, but as I went away I said: 'I do hope she got her glasses back again, Bob.'

And he said, very stiffly: 'O, *do* you!'

I took the newspaper and the dog (whose name I have simply forgotten) and I went clambering about for some time, just ruminating. And what my mind kept hovering over in that dizzying solitude of nature was a subject of paramount appeal to me then—it still is—and I propounded to myself a theory which threw a somewhat dismal light on the uncertainties of fortune. So when my companion, having finished his drawings, rejoined me, I propounded it to him as we journeyed along the ridge with Cork county on our right, Kerry being on the left.

'Twas Bob, same as me own, Ha! Ha!—R.G.

'Has it ever struck you, Bob, that the sequence in which a pack of cards is packed by the makers is what determines, for good and all, every subsequent distribution of those cards?'

'Just tell me that again,' he said.

I went over it once more. 'It's just luck,' he exclaimed.

'So it is,' said I. 'But all the same, the little boy (or it maybe the little girl) who first packs the new pack of cards in its haphazard order, he it is who may be the innocent cause of your ruin!'

'But aren't they always first packed in proper sequence?' he asked.

'I'm surprised at you, Bob! They very seldom are—I don't know why—haven't you ever noticed that?'
'It doesn't make any difference,' he answered.
'O, but think of it! The order the cards happen to be in when first bought must influence every deal—you can't get away from it!'
'Well, I don't mind,' said he.
'Yes,' I assented. 'Like many other things, it is true—but it doesn't matter.'
'Look here!' he burst out. 'I'm getting hungry; we'd better be getting back. Let's go down a different way.'
I agreed heartily, for one of the things that do matter in life is to move in circles, ever-widening rings like those sent out by the stone dropped into water—and to hell with all straight lines and roads and ruts and wrigglers.
'But the stone!' protested Bob. 'The stone just drowns!'
'No, Bob; the stone is the compelling idea, and it waits for you to return with the profit of your experience.'
'I don't want to return to any stones or any ideas—I want to get home; I'm hungry.'
'There is no home, or anything else at all,' I said, 'except in an idea.'
'Well, if there's the idea of a duck or a couple of ducks for supper to-night, I'll be glad. And I'd make a short cut to get 'em.'
'Then this will do,' said I, pointing to a gorge we were just passing.
The top of this whole ridge of mountains is shaped something like a magnet, and we had travelled all along one prong. Here at the head of the valley was a peak jutting a little above the general rugged contour, and it was cloven from its top down to our feet. It looked as if this rift was continued all down the inward face

He means a horse-shoe, some magnets are straight.--R.G.

of the mountain, for the narrow gorge declined very steeply and through its chink we could glimpse the plains of Cork. Mr. Gibbings stared at the gorge, the dog walked into it and whimpered; it was dull and damp and the wind echoed uneasily there.

'It's absolute chaos!'

'What an enchanting idea, Bob; through chaos we emerge! Come on.'

And we entered the valley of the shadow, he and I and the dog. For a few yards it was easy and pleasant, gently sloping, with nice soft grass, but it was very, very narrow and soon we were away from the sun. As we descended into the abyss its overpowering walls seemed to grow higher and we could see but a thin slit of sky far above us. Rocks choked up the canyon; water, transpiring from nothing, dribbled into dark vaults thick with fungus; toads, slime and peculiar ferns lurked in saurian crannies, & high trees clung precariously as if without root to those malignant façades. We climbed rocks, toppled over rocks, or slithered under them, and the constant whining of that dog was an exasperation.

'Shall we give him a bit of a lift?' panted Mr. Gibbings.

'Will we carry a hod!' I answered; for the creature was as big as a goat and we on all fours were no better off than he on his nimble feet.

There lay the bones of a sheep, white to the teeth.

'I don't like the look of this at all,' Mr. Gibbings said. 'We had better turn back.'

'Back? We could never climb back over all that treachery, Bob. We are in for it now, we must keep on.'

We kept on and at last came to the end of the canyon, emerging gratefully into warm air and a footing of sweet grass. But further we could not go, for it all ended in a frightful precipice that plunged straight into appalling depths.

'Now we've *got* to go back,' said Bob.

'I don't think we can do it,' said I to him.

We had had to slide down or drop over the faces of a good many rocks to get there, but the theory of gravitation makes no provision for a rising slide or dropping upwards; in fact the law of gravity takes no count of anything, little or much; it just comes like a thief in the night—and there you are with a nasty boil on your neck. We sat down, but when we observed the silent tears in the eyes of that dog we got up again. To our right the wall of the canyon went on; to the left it had finished in a great hump of rock and heathery earth on the verge of the precipice. With a lift from Bob I got on top of this hump, and then I chanced a drop-down on the other side about eight feet into a gulley. A few feet away was the cliff again, and if I had rolled two yards I'd have been over it; but I did not roll so far, and I could see there was an outlet from the gulley into the open hillside.

I called: 'Come on, Bob.' After a while he appeared on top of the rock, but he could not get down to me. I had taken advantage of a tuft in the face of the rock, but it would not bear *his* weight—he is a person of great mass.

'Put your hands under that tuft and push when I step on it,' said he.

I put up my hands, but the tuft was too high over my head for me to exert any upward pressure. We had a try at it, but he is a person of very grave bulk.

'If you slip, Bob, or I slip, Bob, we'll both be over this cliff!'

He did nothing of the kind, and what he said was 'For the love of God, Bob, don't move an inch'. If you don't believe me, look at the pictures on the title page.--R.G.

For I could not help but notice what might happen to him if anything happened to *me*, or to me if anything happened to *him*; by the same token you can't play Rummy with a fellow for a month and forget it in a single moment—its cares are

ever on your mind. I.O.U's are not a bit of good when the maker of them has, as they say, 'passed over'. Anxiously he peered down at me: 'Don't you think you could manage it?'

A dirty low excuse.—R.G.

I glared up at him; he looked as large as the dome of St. Paul's. 'No, Bob, I wouldn't fancy the job; not if you cut yourself in half and came in two bits.'

'I'd only be on you for a quarter of a second.'

'That's more than half-way to eternity. You had better strike back a few yards and see if you can find a loophole higher up. I can't get back to you, but if you can get down to me we're all right.'

He vanished for a while and I stood listening, with the beating heart of a man who had got himself into safety and waited, helpless, for his comrade to do the same, knowing all the time that he would not be able to do it in the same way. I waited long and heard no sound. (He has fallen over the cliff! What'll I do now?) I thought of his wife, of his family, of his good looks, of what a song and dance there would be at the hotel when I arrived bearing his battered corse. Suddenly he appeared above my head on the same spot again.

'I say,' he called, 'what about the dog?'

'To hell with the dog. Can you make it yourself?'

'But we can't leave him!'

'Throw him down to me.'

'He's not here,' he said.

'Then to hell with him again!'

'I can't find him anywhere at all.'

'Never mind the dog. Can you get out of that?'

'I think I can, I'll make a try in a minute,' says he. 'Are you sure he's not down there with you?'

'Certain,' said I.

'I wonder where he can be.'

Then for a further while I could hear him going about whistling for that creature, and I reflected upon the downright effrontery of imagining that a dog could not do as much as any man in a bother of that kind. It was not a very bright dog, it is true, and I can't remember its provoking name, but he had four good feet and a part of a tail.

Bob again, same as before.—R.G.

In a few minutes more Mr. Gibbings rolled down beside me, as sound as a roach. He had found a passage that put him to no dismay or peril at all, and although I was deeply gratified to behold him there I could not help feeling that I had been rather brutally treated by that law of gravity or whatever it was.

'You know what I think?' said Mr. Gibbings, as we walked safely out to the hillside and met the blessed dog gambolling towards us; 'I think we will make it a rule that the player who keeps on losing shall have the option of doubling or trebling stakes on any hand when he thinks fit.'

'The loser?'

'Yes, only the loser.'

'You think that, do you, Bob!' I exclaimed in stupefaction; for how a man just escaping from calamity could thus pester his intellect to invent new rules for trapping the unwary in a friendly game of cards, smote me almost beyond belief.

'Yes, *that's* what I think,' said he.

AT THE CLOSE OF OUR VISIT TO IRELAND IT was in my mind to compose a valedictory essay, setting down my thoughts on leaving that delectable land. It shall contain — I said—an echo of the tone of Ireland, a reflection of its beauty, and (if I have the fortunate ears) a murmur of its everlasting music. It was to be quite a moving little piece, with a title something like 'Desolation'. But I was reminded by the chief conspirator, whose flattering likeness appears on page 3, that *his* thoughts were not of that kind; that this book was never intended to be a History of Ireland by a slob from Sussex with a Kathleen Mavoureen squint in his eye, and he did not want to be mixed up in any such nonsense.

So I resigned my little essay.

'Your fears are baseless; have no qualms, Robert.' I said.

'I can't help it,' he retorted. 'I've done my utmost to keep you in hand. The book is to be a straight-forward book of instructions about a game of cards, a noble game'—he called it that! —'full of the stratagems of Jacks and Kings and Jokers; but you've been streeling into every bog and pub from Cork to Clare and back again. I tell you, it makes me anxious.'

' 'Tis pleasant in Clare,' I said. 'Even the days are longer there.'

'Well, yes, I liked the horse-racing,' he answered.

For it was in Clare we had gone to a race meeting. On the sands by the seashore. We had been warned of it by an old gossoon. 'Da whole country stands still for onct in the year. Da place is black wid cars for miles around, farr as de eye can reach!'

Well, we didn't notice any blackness, but it was an Occasion, a grand go-as-you-please sort of meeting, the people strolling about all over the course, the jockeys shouting to them to get out of the way, & the bookmakers scamps for romancing. Said one of them to a lovely lady as he handed her a ticket:

'I am much obliged to ye, Ma'am. I hope it's a winner.'
'Do ye now!' said she, with a trifle of sarcasm.
'Indeed I do! And', he continued, 'it *must* be so—for one of us.'
'Is the green in my eye, or is it in yours?' the lady enquired.
'Ah, ma'am,' the bookmaker replied, 'your eye sees no furder dan your beautiful eyelashes!'
And it was in Clare we had begun this game of cards which was to haunt us wherever we journeyed; it might be here, it might be there, we could not withstand its allurements; not even when Mrs. Cronin, expecting an influx of visitors, sent us out twenty miles in the car to buy two pair of bread. We got the four long loaves as big as kerbstones into the back of the car, and then there was a stop by the roadside to make an enquiry, and it's 'What about a little hand or two now?' We played a few rubbers in the rain, to *his* great disparagement.
After several weeks the score between us had reached such magnitude that it was going to take a deal of arithmetic to strike a balance, so we just went on and on with a pure faith in ultimate justice, which, I may add, had consistently shown a partiality to my welfare.
And so we reached the ship one dark devil of a night to make the journey home, and steamed out of the harbour in a black breeze and broil that were rather intimidating. Sad cries were ringing from the bosom of the ship, the hold being full of pigs whose hours were numbered by those of the cruise, when I went up on deck to take my last look at Ireland. Beyond an odd light or two that seemed to have gone crazy I could see nothing. The ship was bounding in an elephantine way, the wind roared, the waves flounced and grabbed, and there were no passengers to be seen except two nuns sitting in a nook up there reading like saints in two little prayer books; looking very pale and reading very hard. Mr. Gibbings was below in

the saloon, taking his little something to steady him, so I sat down beside the nuns and took a look at my score, so as to be prepared for Mr. Gibbings when he signified that he was ready to come to some sort of settlement. There were dozens of scraps of paper and a long sheet of figures, and I came to a rough conclusion that unless the record *he* had made was a great deal better than it was possible for it to be he was ruined and I, provided I could string it out of him, was to be rich. My gratification was tinged with a simple feeling of commiseration for him. I remembered that Nietzsche had written: 'I love him who is ashamed when the dice fall in his favour, & who then asketh: Am I a dishonest player?' But Nietzsche had also written: 'Even if one have all the virtues, there is still one thing needful: to send the virtues to sleep at the right time.' And besides, he died mad.

'I'll go down and reckon up the score with Bob,' I said, 'It's about time.'

I got up and was tottering along the deck in the blast when something extraordinary struck the ship, a devastating wallop of a wave, and my feet seemed to leave me; my hat was certainly gone, and in the twink of an eye the papers too were ravaged out of my grasp. Whether one's whole past life really flashes through one's mind at the moment of impact with death, is an unresolvable mystery; but I do know that at this moment, although I was only lying half-stunned on the slippery heaving deck, I instantly thought of a tombstone I had once seen in a churchyard in the Romney Marshes. It was a memorial to an unknown sailor whose body had been washed ashore a hundred years ago, and this Christian stone recorded that he had been 'Done to Death by Neptune'.

Was I being done to death by Neptune? No; but I had been

The poorest story ever I heard. Look at the picture on page 50 and you'll see the kind of night it was.—R.G.

badly hit by all that water shaking itself, and I crawled off to my bunk. Those little papers—the I.O.U's. and the score, my passports to affluence—were all gone, but although the ashes of disaster were smouldering around me I did not mention the misfortune to Mr. Gibbings. What a fool I had been! I thought I might be able to devise some means of retrieving the deplorable loss, but I couldn't invent a thing! What a fool I had been! And I could not sleep—there was a cad of an earwig roaming about my pillow, and I do not care for earwigs on board. The ship rolled and grunted all night long, the pigs cried, it was dreadful, and I was glad when morning came.

At breakfast Mr. Gibbings, who is really a powerful and resourceful man, seemed rather distracted, and I became concerned about him.

'Are you feeling well, Bob?'

'I am all right', he said, 'in my stomach.'

Being anxious to draw him out I gave him a square lead: 'Is there any little thing on your mind, Bob?'

'Yes', said he, 'and no. That is to say, it isn't on my mind. I've been thinking all night about something: did I give those Rummy papers to you?'

'Papers, Bob! You've given me nothing yet.'

'Then I've lost them,' he said; 'I've searched everywhere.'

'What papers, Bob?'

'Those Rummy papers; our score of the game.'

Here was Pelion, simply crashing down upon poor defrauded Ossa.

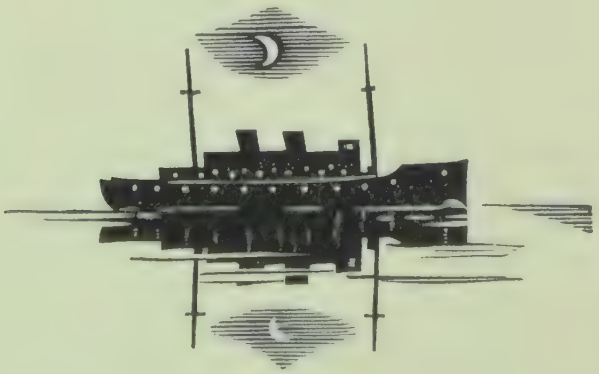
'But you couldn't! You *couldn't* lose *them*, Bob!'

'I've lost them,' he repeated firmly. 'And I'm damned if I know how we stand now. Do you know?'

'But how in the world did you come to lose them?'

'They must have blown overboard, while I was looking at them,' said he.

'Blown overboard!'
'Yes.'
'How?'
'They just blew. Damned if I know how we stand—do you?'
'You didn't blow them yourself, Bob, did you?'
'No,' he naively replied; 'they just blew. Very windy. It's a nuisance, but I reckon we were just about square; or perhaps I was a bit to the good, I don't know. What do you think?'
Now was the time for me to make a clean breast of all, but a waft of serene goodness blew across the grave of my drowned hopes as I saw my chance of pointing a moral lesson, a kind of warning to him for the future.
'Bob,' said I, 'I had you ruined, skinned completely! But,
The liar!—R.G. we've had a good time together, and so . . . I . . . you know . . . I just tore the papers up, last night.'
'You tore 'em up!' he cried.
'Sure,' I said. 'You didn't think I'd want to be your ruin, Bob, did you?'
He stared at me with his fine honest eyes; but upon my soul, I thought they wavered a trifle.
'I wonder if the bar is open yet,' said he.



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THE END

POSTSCRIPT:—For Coppard read throughout Prevaricator.—R.G.

THE WALTHAM RULES OF RUMMY

For not 'knocking' when his hand is empty of scoring cards, the player incurs a penalty of 20 points.

Should the 'knocker's' count exceed that of any of his opponents, his points for that hand are to be doubled.

If the 'knocker' holds a complete sequence of seven cards in a suit, his opponents' count for that hand must be trebled.

If such sequence be made with the aid of any deuces or jokers, the opponents' count is only to be doubled.

When *any* player ('knocker' or opponent) holds a *quarte* of any kind, all the other players must add four times the value of the *quarte* card to their count. The *quarte* must be complete without duplicates or jokers; i.e. four eights, each of the four suits = 32.

When the player holds *five* of any kind, the penalty for opponents shall be five times the value of the card, i.e. five kings = 50.

For *six* of any kind, the penalty is six times the value of the card; and for *seven* of a kind, seven times the value.

In the case of any player holding a number of deuces or jokers (not associated with any other cards) the following shall be the penalties against the others:

4 deuces or jokers		100 points
5	„ „	150 „
6	„ „	200 „
7	„ „	250 „

When an opponent is left with an ace as his only scoring card, the ace shall count only as one; but this rule does not apply to the 'knocker'.

NOTES FOR FURTHER RULES

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God save Ireland!

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